

# September 2025 Town and Parish Newsletter

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[Suffolk County Council | Conservative Group \(suffolkconservatives.org.uk\)](https://suffolkconservatives.org.uk)

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Suffolk County Council is pleased to announce the second year of its £500,000 Culture Project Fund. This initiative is aimed at strengthening and supporting local arts and museum projects in our local communities across the county.

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The Suffolk Business Board has today released an open letter strongly endorsing the proposed devolution deal to establish a Mayoral Combined County Authority across Norfolk and Suffolk.

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Column by Cllr Richard Smith MVO, deputy leader of the council and cabinet member for finance, economic development and skills

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### **Suffolk's vision for nature recovery**

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Suffolk County Council is one of 48 responsible authorities in England, appointed by The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to lead on preparing its LNRS. The council's cabinet will seek to approve it for publication at their meeting on Tuesday 9 September.

The strategy's aim is to address the decline in nature, identify ways to help it recover and deliver wider benefits such as reducing flood risk.

**"This is an important document; it will hopefully be the catalyst to reversing the decline in Suffolk's nature."**

Together these strategies will form a national 'nature network', proposing actions such as the creation of wetlands, restoration of peatlands, planting of trees and hedgerows, and more sustainable management of existing woodlands and other habitats like grasslands. Other Suffolk local authorities, nature experts, farmers and a wide range of interested organisations have contributed to Suffolk's strategy, along with members of the public. The process of creating the strategy began in 2022 and has had over 50,000 Suffolk engagements recorded at over 250 events. This culminated in a public consultation in Spring this year, with over 500 responses.

"What this process has shown us, is that nature truly means a great deal to the people of Suffolk.

"There is a clear passion for caring for wildlife, but also recognition of the physical and mental health benefits of a thriving natural environment.

"I'd like to thank members of the public, landowners and experts for their contributions, enabling us to agree priorities for nature recovery in Suffolk and propose the actions to reverse this decline.

"This is an important document, it will hopefully be the catalyst to reversing the decline in Suffolk's nature. In turn, this can help in many other ways by mitigating inland flooding risk, creating new green spaces to improve our health and wellbeing, and supporting farmers to bring new funding into the rural economy and generate employment and training opportunities."

Suffolk has worked very closely with Norfolk County Council, who are also preparing their own LNRS. The authorities formed the [Norfolk and Suffolk Nature Recovery Partnership](#), to identify common themes and opportunities to enable nature recovery support. Subject to approval by the cabinet at Suffolk County Council, the LNRS will then be shared with district and borough councils and the Broads Authority for a final consultation before publication by the end of October.

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## A new way to invest that benefits Suffolk and its people

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Suffolk County Council, as part of the Sustainable Suffolk partnership, are hoping to raise £1 million to fund local projects that will cut carbon emissions in Suffolk. For as little as £5, people, businesses and organisations can make low-risk investments to fund these environmental projects and receive a steady financial return.

The Sustainable Suffolk Investment offers returns 4% interest a year over a five-year term. This means investors will receive their original investment back in 6-monthly instalments along with interest on the remaining balance which can be reinvested or used as an income.

There are also no fees to invest, and the investment is ISA eligible meaning the interest earned will be tax free. Additionally, Esmée Fairburn Foundation will match the money invested by local people by 50%.

**“Local people will be able to both reap the environmental benefits that the funded projects will bring and receive a monetary return on their investment.”**

**Councillor Gerald Kelly, Chair of the Suffolk Councils’ Environment Portfolio Holders’ Group**

The carbon-cutting projects will be delivered from April 2026 to March 2027 by Suffolk County Council. Investors are able to stay updated on these projects to see exactly how they are making a difference in Suffolk.

This first round of investment will be open until 1 December. However, if the target is not reached, there will be future opportunities to invest. The scheme is open to people both within and outside of Suffolk, including residents, businesses, community groups and other interested investors. Everyone is welcome to invest.

**Councillor Gerald Kelly, Chair of the Suffolk Councils’ Environment Portfolio Holders’ Group, said:**

“For decades, Suffolk’s Public Sector Organisations have been working to improve our sustainability through the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan. Climate change is a problem that impacts us all and this new investment offer is a chance for local people to have a more active role in this incredibly important work to combat the climate crisis.”

“Local people will be able to both reap the environmental benefits that the funded projects will bring and receive a monetary return on their investment. The offer from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to match residents’ investments by 50% will allow us to progress further, faster. And of course, it will mean we can make taxpayer money in our county go further.”

This investment scheme gives people a low-risk way to make their money go further whilst helping the environment, a win-win. For more information about the Sustainable Suffolk Investment and how to get involved, please [visit the Abundance website](#).

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*Investments are long term and may be hard to sell. Council investments are not a savings account, and you are lending money to a council. Changes in market interest rates may affect the value of your investment if you sell before maturity. Approver: Abundance investment (FRN 525432). Approval date: 20/08/2025*

*Abundance’s service in relation to council investments (P2P loans) is not covered by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS). Tax treatment depends on your individual circumstances and may be subject to change in the future.*

*Holding investments in an IFISA does not reduce the risk of the investment or protect you from losses. You can still lose all your money. It only means that any potential gains from*

*your investment will be tax free. The tax treatment of your investment will depend on your individual circumstances and may change in the future.*

*The Sustainable Suffolk Investment, which is a loan, is Green Loan Principles compliant and is being issued under a Green Finance Framework. This is a voluntary standard which sets out how the council will meet the Green Loan Principles. This assures investors that funds raised can only be used to help them deliver on eligible green projects from within this framework, and Abundance will monitor the use of funds across the investment term to ensure the principles are being adhered to.*

*ISA rules apply.*

### 32,000 solar panels and counting for Solar Together Suffolk project

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The group-buying programme enables Suffolk residents to buy solar panels and battery storage, helping to save money on their energy bills and cut carbon emissions. It is backed by Suffolk County Council and all local borough and district councils.

Solar Together Suffolk has been running for seven years, and in that time has:

- installed 32,024 solar panels at 2,651 Suffolk households
- installed 1,768 battery storage systems
- reduced 1,900 tonnes of carbon emissions across the county

**“Homes still account for nearly a quarter of all Suffolk’s CO2 emissions. But we are helping homeowners and landlords reduce these through initiatives like Solar Together Suffolk, and the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan.”**

It’s [free to register with Solar Together Suffolk](#) and receive an installation quote - there is no obligation to go ahead with the installation.

The project helps homeowners feel confident that they are paying the right price for a high-quality installation from qualified installers, and increases their independence from the national grid.

The scheme not only offers solar panels, but also battery storage and EV chargepoints. Customers who have already invested in solar panels can also get quotes for battery storage, to get more from the renewable energy they generate.

“Solar Together Suffolk has installed an impressive 11.7 MW of solar panels across Suffolk homes.

“Many Suffolk customers have told us that the main reason for installing solar panels was for the benefit of the climate and environment, followed by saving money on bills and reducing their reliance on the grid.

“Homes still account for nearly a quarter of all Suffolk’s CO2 emissions. But we are helping homeowners and landlords reduce these through initiatives like Solar Together Suffolk, and the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan.

“We want to help residents make their homes and lifestyles as sustainable and energy efficient as possible – whether through improving insulation, how homes are heated, electric vehicle infrastructure, or solar panels and batteries.”

**Marie-Louise Abretti, Solar Together UK Business Manager, said:**

“With energy prices continuing to fluctuate, residents of Suffolk are looking for opportunities to reduce their carbon emissions, save on energy bills, and increase their independence from the grid.

“The Solar Together Suffolk group-buying scheme offers a straightforward way to make an informed decision and to access a competitive offer from a trusted, vetted provider.”

### Extra event for aspiring firefighters announced following unprecedented demand

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The FREE one-hour virtual session will take place online via Microsoft Teams on Tuesday 9 September from 6 pm. It is open to anyone aged 18 and over, with no maximum age limit and no requirement to be a Suffolk resident.

The Service ran a series of virtual and in-person taster sessions in August, with the latter hosted at fire stations across the county. These gave attendees an insight into the life of a wholetime firefighter, and the recruitment and training processes. Participants who attended in person were also able to meet the recruitment team and serving firefighters, who showed them around the station and equipment.

These sessions proved extremely popular, prompting the Service to take the highly unusual step of adding an additional virtual event to meet demand.

Tickets for the added session are available on a first come, first served basis, so the team advises that anyone interested should book as early as possible to avoid disappointment. You can register via Eventbrite - [Suffolk Fire and Rescue Wholetime Taster Session- Virtual Tickets, Multiple Dates | Eventbrite](#).

The session is open to the public, wholetime external transfers, and on-call firefighters from Suffolk and other services. Attendance at a taster session is essential for anyone wishing to apply later this month, as it ensures that candidates fully understand the role and recruitment process.

**Martyn Hazelwood, Recruitment and Retention Manager at Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, said:**

"This additional virtual session will be the last opportunity for anyone considering a career as a wholetime firefighter to find out what is really involved in the role and what makes our fire service such a great place to work.

"Many people who have attended our sessions have been surprised to find out that being a firefighter isn't just about fighting fires, so it's well worth getting a proper insight into what life is like as part of our team before applying."

**Steve Wiles, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection, added:**

"This is fantastic news, not only for Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service but for the county – the fact that so many people are expressing an interest in becoming a firefighter shows how valued the role is and how committed our community is to public safety."

Further information about becoming a wholetime firefighter is available via the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service recruitment website: <https://suffolk-firefighters.co.uk/wholetime-firefighter/>

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### 300th No Cold Calling Zone launched during Trusted Trader Week

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The new zone was created following an incident where a doorstep caller approached a resident offering to clean her driveway for £400. The men then pressured her into making cash withdrawals, escorting her to a local bank where they helped her withdraw two sums of money totalling £400. The driveway was only partially cleaned and dirt was deliberately sprayed over her property and vehicles.

The launch of this milestone zone takes place during Trusted Trader Week, which highlights the work Suffolk Trading Standards does to protect residents from rogue traders and promote vetted, reliable businesses through the Suffolk Trusted Trader scheme.

**Councillor Steve Wiles, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection, said:**

"Doorstep cold callers can often turn out to be unscrupulous people who prey on the elderly and vulnerable in their homes, the very place where they should feel safest.

"No Cold Calling Zones help deter such behaviour by making it clear that residents in that zone will not deal with traders who knock at their door uninvited.

"I applaud the hard work of the community, councillors, police and Trading Standards in bringing this milestone zone into place. These schemes are proven to have a deterrent effect, and I am proud that Suffolk now has 300 in operation.

"I urge residents that are looking to have work undertaken in their home to get quotes from two or three traders. Ask friends and family for recommendations of traders who have carried out work for them. You can also check Suffolk Trusted Trader for traders that have been vetted and approved by us."

A 'No Cold Calling Zone' is a nominated area where residents collectively state they do not want uninvited traders calling at their homes. Zones are established in response to incidents of doorstep crime, distraction burglary, or where there is a community more vulnerable to such practices.

Residents in a nominated area are consulted and, with their agreement, receive an information pack, door sticker, and street signage to reinforce the message. Since the first zone was launched in Ipswich in 2009, more than 14,300 properties across Suffolk are now covered.

Anyone wishing to nominate their road can visit the 'No Cold Calling' page on the [Suffolk County Council website](#).

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### New homes for Newmarket under way

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Edmundham Developments, a joint venture between Lovell Partnerships Limited and Suffolk County Council, is delivering the development of 2, 3, 4 and 5 bedroom homes.

Building work on Astley Place began in May 2025, with the first show home and the marketing suite planned to open in early 2026.

On Wednesday 3 September, members of the Suffolk County Council Housing board were given a tour of the site.

**"There's a really positive buzz around this development, people in the local area are keen to know how things are progressing and have been enquiring about availability for some time now."**

**Councillor Chris Chambers, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy, Planning and Waste**

Homes are built to exceed modern standards, combining thoughtful design, high specification and future ready technology to deliver lasting comfort and performance.

Triple glazed windows and doors are fitted throughout, alongside enhanced insulation to both the external walls and ground floors to offer exceptional thermal performance.

Each home features a highly efficient air source heat pump system, photovoltaic panels and underfloor heating for the ideal balance of comfort and control.

**Matthew Goakes, Area Director, Lovell, said:**

"Newmarket is a fantastic location and, combined with the quality of homes being built, we have already seen huge interest from people already living in the local area. Astley Place is the first development to come to the market, by Edmundham Developments.

"Working alongside Suffolk County Council, we are excited to see the development progressing and can't wait to welcome members of this new community to their new homes."

Shared ownership of properties will be available - a government-backed scheme to help those who can't afford to buy outright, to get onto the property ladder.

Astley Place is named after Sir John Astley, a notable 19<sup>th</sup> century figure in Newmarket's racing history. He raised funds to build the first Astley Institute and, as a steward for the Jockey Club, revised racing rules and rebuilt the Rowley Mile Stands.

For more information about Astley Place and Edmundham Developments, visit [www.edmundham.co.uk](http://www.edmundham.co.uk)

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### Gull Wing Bridge celebrates first anniversary

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Since being opened to traffic on September 7, 2024 the bridge has significantly reduced congestion and improved connectivity between the northern and southern parts of the town.

It has performed more than 1,000 lifts in its first year of operation, with more than 350 vessels travelling under the span without causing delay to traffic during the summer.

It has also won awards - the 2025 Bridges Design and Construction Award for projects over £10 million, and a Highly Commended honour at the Chartered Institute of Highways & Transport award. It is also currently shortlisted in the Best Transport Project category for the British Construction and Infrastructure Awards 2025, which are being held in October 2025.

The bridge crosses Lake Lothing and the East Suffolk railway line and comprises of eight spans, including the largest hydraulically driven rolling bascule bridge in the world.

**Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Operational Highways and Flooding, said:** "The Council was delighted to deliver this third crossing of Lake Lothing, with the benefits being felt across the town and surrounding areas almost immediately.

"By taking the pressure away from the existing crossings, Gull Wing has transformed travel times, supporting local businesses and the local economy.

"Modern cycle and pedestrian routes flank the carriageway along the bridge, encouraging more sustainable modes of transport, providing a significant step forward for Lowestoft, its residents, and businesses."

Work began on the bridge in April 2021, having been an aspiration since the early 20th century.

Lowestoft's new landmark was in the spotlight within 24 hours of opening as the cycling tour of Great Britain passed over it.

It was then formally opened by Her Royal Highness, Princess Anne The Princess Royal on November 19.

Spanning 345 metres in total, the bridge features a main bascule span that is 39.5 metres long and 22 metres wide. It sits 12 metres clear above high tide when closed and can accommodate marine vessels up to 32 metres wide.

When it is required to open for larger vessels, there is a typical delay of around six minutes. The opening of the bridge has relieved congestion as through traffic no longer has to use the existing Bascule Bridge in Lowestoft town centre, or the crossing at Oulton Broad.

The name 'Gull Wing' was coined by Somerleyton Primary School pupils Eva Ainslie, Jack Baldry, and Hayden Nicholls in a competition for local schools.

They took the inspiration for the name from the shape of the bascule span's beams and their resemblance to the wings of a gull.

## Saving Suffolk £39.4 million a year and enhancing local services – One Suffolk plan revealed

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Millions of pounds of public money would be saved and reinvested in frontline services and benefits for the whole of Suffolk, if the Government backs a new plan published today (Monday 8 September).

The ambitious proposal will see all of Suffolk's six councils abolished and replaced with one new unitary council - which would deliver both local and county-wide services.

The One Suffolk business case demonstrates that a single unitary for Suffolk will save £78.2 million after the first five years, while three councils would cost an eye-watering £145.3 million more than the current two-tier system. After the first five years, one council would save £39.4 million a year, whereas three would cost £13.1 million more than the current model. The business case is built on rigorous financial analysis of Suffolk-based data conducted by global advisory firm Grant Thornton, rather than generic national modelling.

One Suffolk would have the capacity to create real improvements to council services which would benefit everyone, including:

- Improved financial resilience, enabling the unitary council to free up resources for frontline services and keep council tax as low as possible.
- Harmonising Council Tax to the lowest level across Suffolk. Based on current levels this would result in Band D properties seeing a reduction of £245 in Ipswich, £17 in East Suffolk, £29 in West Suffolk, £19 in Babergh and a freeze in Mid Suffolk.
- A new deal for market towns, including Ipswich, backed by a £40m capital investment fund, and a review of car parking charges and markets conducted in consultation with traders, businesses and representative bodies.
- Empowering communities by offering powers and funding to town and parish councils where these councils express a desire for additional responsibilities. Creating a new town council for Ipswich to enhance democratic representation.
- A proactive and revitalised highways service that says 'yes' more - acting swiftly, communicating clearly and delivering more.
- Creating a unified planning framework that delivers greater consistency, efficiency, and strategic alignment across Suffolk, paired with local planning committees so decisions are made close to home.
- Leveraging technology and innovation to create a modern council prepared for future challenges.
- Building a strong, flourishing, and resilient local economy that serves all residents, businesses, and communities.
- A stronger voice for Suffolk through effective collaboration with the new mayor, focusing on clear investment priorities that maximise benefits.

**Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's cabinet member for devolution, local government reform and NSIPs, said:**

"I am certain that One Suffolk will deliver the greatest possible savings and the greatest improvement to services of any of the proposals put to government.

"It will save a net £39.4m each year, which, amongst other things, will enable the new council to establish a new locality model backed by 16 locality teams, empower towns and parish councils that want to do more to take on funding and responsibilities, and deliver initiatives like a new deal for Market Towns and Ipswich which is backed by a £40m capital investment pot and a full review of car parking and markets conducted hand-in-hand with business.

"When we go through a process like this and tell residents it will save money, it is only fair they feel that benefit on day one of the new council. That is why we back harmonising Council Tax to the lowest level in Suffolk. Currently this would see everyone in Suffolk have their bills reduced, apart from in Mid Suffolk where bills would be frozen at the same level. "We are very clear that this would be a brand-new council with a new culture and a new relationship with residents, businesses, community and voluntary organisations and town and parish councils. Too often our existing councils, both county and district or borough, start from a position of no. We've heard this loud and clear and have built the One Suffolk proposal around enabling what people want to see locally and giving them access to their local council.

“I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their engagement with the One Suffolk campaign. We spoke directly to residents, members of the business community, voluntary, community, faith and social enterprises, parish and town councils, and political stakeholders and other key influencers.

“Together we have created a plan for Suffolk that we can all proudly stand behind.” One Suffolk was developed by Suffolk County Council in response to Government’s call to reorganise local government across the country and move away from the current two-tier system that has been in place since 1974.

This is the first of two business cases expected from Suffolk’s councils outlining their proposed plans for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in the county.

Under the One Suffolk proposal is the creation of a brand-new organisation with new councillors, innovative service delivery methods, and streamlined local communications and accountability. This isn’t just a continuation or expansion of the existing structure. One Suffolk will forge new relationships with town and parish councils, businesses, voluntary groups, and public sector organisations.

The alternative proposal from the districts and borough councils, to split Suffolk into three arbitrary council areas, could put key services such as social care at serious risk. It would also cost many millions to set up.

By creating three new areas across Suffolk, essential county-wide services like adult social care and children’s services must be disaggregated - resulting in higher costs and a postcode lottery for the county’s most vulnerable residents.

The One Suffolk campaign engaged communities from across Suffolk, with 8,189 responses to our Residents’ Survey. This made it the largest survey response rate for the county council in the past decade.

Subject to approval by the Council’s Cabinet on 16 September, the One Suffolk business plan will be submitted to Government by 26 September. Government Ministers will be then deciding later this year which proposals to put out to public consultation, before making their final decision in early 2026.

## New mental health booklet and suicide awareness film launched for World Suicide Prevention Day

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*Well Minds* is a newly developed mental health and wellbeing booklet designed to support and empower Suffolk residents of all ages to take control of their mental health. It does this through providing details of services, helplines and advice for children, young people, adults, and carers, as well as signposting to specialist services for those facing complex challenges such as bereavement, trauma, or financial stress.

The booklet, which was based on a version previously created specifically for residents in East Suffolk, has been developed by the Public Health Team at Suffolk County Council in partnership with local partners, and residents with lived experience.

The booklet is available in both digital and physical format and has launched today in recognition of World Suicide Prevention Day. Copies were given out at an information event held at Kesgrave Community Centre on 10 September and will continue to be available from all libraries across the county. A digital version can be accessed at <https://www.healthysuffolk.org.uk/mentalhealth>.

**Cllr Steve Wiles, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection said:**

“Our mental health is as important as our physical health, and it shapes how we live, connect, and cope with challenges.

“Supporting it is more important than ever, and we are proud to be able to help residents access the right support at the right time.

“We hope it will make emotional wellbeing and mental health support more visible, accessible, and inclusive for all residents.”

In addition to the release of the Well Minds booklet today, a short, but powerful film on suicide awareness created by members of Particip8! - a young people’s participation group run by Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust (NSFT) - is also to premiere.

Commissioned by Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership, the film encourages open conversations about suicidal thoughts. It sees young people read quotes from individuals with lived experience of mental ill health before sharing their own reflections on coping and supporting others.

The video will be used as an official resource by Suffolk County Council and NSFT, and it will also be made available to organisations in Norfolk, Suffolk and beyond.

Kyra, 23, from Ipswich, was motivated to take part in the video because of her past experiences. She will speak at the event about the importance of safety planning. She said: “For many years I have struggled with my mental health. In 2020, I made an attempt on my life and I truly believed I had no future.

“Today, I am 14 months clean, back in counselling, and living life one day at a time. It’s not always easy, but I finally feel at peace, and I am creating memories instead of running from my pain.”

Nick, 19, is a former NSFT service user and member of the participation group, who also shared his story as part of the emotive film. He has contributed to interview panels and believes lived experience is vital in shaping services. He said:

“Throughout my teenage years, I’ve spent a lot of years with NSFT. I was sectioned in 2022 – I’ve had some pretty dark times.

“I do think it’s important for service users to be involved in events like this because they’ve been on the other side of it. I’ve had these experiences but now I can use them to share my story with others.”

Dr Faisal Sethi, Chief Medical Officer and Deputy Chief Executive at NSFT, said:

“These young people have been courageous in sharing their lived experience to contribute to a better understanding in society of suicidal thoughts and mental ill health, and to improve our services.

“We’re thrilled to support the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership with this resource that will be a benefit to so many.”

To watch the film and to learn more about the work being done by the Public Health Team at Suffolk County Council on the topic of Suicide Prevention, visit [www.healthysuffolk.org.uk/healthy-you/suicide-prevention](http://www.healthysuffolk.org.uk/healthy-you/suicide-prevention)

### £1.3 million of dangerous electric vehicles seized in major multi-agency operation

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Led by Suffolk Trading Standards’ Imports Team, and supported by Hertfordshire and Metropolitan Police, the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) and the Department for Transport, the agencies worked in partnership, sharing intelligence and resources to target goods imported through the Port of Felixstowe.

The operation sought to detect and detain unsafe and non-compliant electric off-road motorcycles and disrupt the importation of the illegal imports before they reached consumers. This action was carried out to prevent serious harm caused by fire, explosion, electric shock, as well as anti-social behaviour and criminality linked to these vehicles. During the joint operation, suspect containers were held at the border and inspected by Officers from Suffolk Trading Standards and Hertfordshire Police.

Following three days of detailed examinations, 340 electric transport goods were detained or seized. All were assessed as dangerous and posing a serious risk to safety. Some of the goods were unlabelled, whilst some had labelling only in Chinese.

Many were supplied with non-UK plugs and chargers, with unsafe UK travel adaptors posing a fire risk. Some were CE/UKCA marked but much of the technical documentation supplied was fake.

Because of the various issues found, none of the goods were legal for the UK, on or off the road, and many were capable of reaching speeds in excess of 50mph.

The goods included:

- 224 counterfeit or grey import Sur-ron electric motorbikes, including Lite Bee, Hyper Bee and Ultra Bee models, some of which can reach 56mph (value £1,027,905)

- 5 Talaria electric motorbikes retailing around £5,000 each
- A high-powered 'Arctic Leopard' electric motorbike valued at £6,000 which can be ridden over 63mph
- A Blade II 'Teverun' electric scooter worth £6,000 and capable of speeds of 53mph
- 40 high-powered electric bikes commonly used by food couriers

The total retail value of seized or detained goods is estimated at £1,384,630.

In addition to removing unsafe goods from circulation, the operation uncovered incorrect and misleading import declarations and identified businesses linked to the illegal supply chain.

Intelligence gathered will be shared nationally to disrupt similar activity elsewhere.

**Councillor Steve Wiles, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member responsible for Public Health and Public Protection, said:**

"This was a sophisticated and highly targeted operation that stopped more than a million pounds' worth of dangerous, counterfeit and non-compliant electric vehicles from reaching UK consumers.

"These products pose a very real threat - not just through the risk of fire or electric shock, but also through their links to anti-social behaviour and criminality.

"I want to thank our Trading Standards team and all the partner agencies involved for their expertise and commitment in protecting the public and disrupting the supply chains behind these illegal goods."

**Assistant Chief Constable Nick Caveney, of Hertfordshire Constabulary, said:**

"This intelligence-led joint operation was a huge success for Hertfordshire police. By sending Herts police officers to support this crackdown at Felixstowe we found more than 50 unsafe and illegally imported electric off-road motorcycles that were destined for sale in our county.

"Stopping electric motorbikes like these from reaching the streets of Hertfordshire, where we see their links to anti-social behaviour and criminality, is a priority for the constabulary.

"Across the country, police forces have been running Operation Topaz deployments this summer as part of an National Police Chiefs' Council-led initiative to tackle road-related harm and wider criminality in a proactive way, focusing resources in the right areas and targeting those that are using vehicles on the roads illegally and for criminal purposes, to protect and support victims of sexual offences, domestic abuse and other violent crimes."

Suffolk Trading Standards will continue to work with enforcement partners to remove unsafe e-transport goods from the UK market, trace their supply routes, and ensure that criminals profiting from dangerous imports are stopped at the earliest opportunity.

If you have purchased a product that you think may be unsafe, stop using it immediately and report it to Trading Standards via Citizens Advice Consumer Service on 0808 223 1133.

## Happy Road! Delight as Woodbridge school gets new zebra crossing through Active Travel

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The first scheme of the Active Travel Woodbridge project has now been delivered on the ground by Suffolk County Council.

A new zebra crossing has been installed on Burkitt Road outside St Mary's Church of England Primary School.

The work was completed during the school summer holidays to minimise disruption, and two further crossings are planned, at Hasketon Road and Grundisburgh Road. Both are scheduled to be completed in early 2026.

The overall scheme seeks to make it safer to walk, wheel and cycle around the town by providing more space such as widening pavements, installing safer crossing points, and creating safer junctions.

**St Mary's headteacher Mrs Karen Read said:** "We are delighted with the installation of a zebra crossing outside our school. It means our children and families can cross the extremely busy road with increased safety and confidence.

"New extended parking restrictions means pedestrians also have better visibility when crossing the road.

"This won't only benefit the children of St Mary's but also the students of other local schools. We are hugely grateful for this wonderful addition to our local environment."

**Councillor Alexander Nicoll, Suffolk County Council Deputy Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy, said:** "The new crossing has been very well received by staff, pupils, and parents. It also benefits local residents.

"Burkitt Road is a busy road so the installation of a zebra crossing outside the school is exactly the sort of scheme that Active Travel Woodbridge is there to promote.

"Our Active Travel vision seeks to provide people with more options to walk, wheel and cycle for local journeys, reducing traffic speeds and making the roads less busy for those who have to use them."

Suffolk County Council (SCC) secured funding from Active Travel England in 2022 to look at how active travel could be encouraged in Woodbridge by improving the local infrastructure.

In 2023, SCC secured a further £5m to start delivering deliver some of these improvements, of which the Burkitt Road crossing is the first.

Active Travel Woodbridge project has been split into two phases - South Woodbridge (Phase 1) and Woodbridge Town Centre (Phase 2).

Phase 1 saw a public consultation between February and April 2024 where four plans for improvements were submitted to the public for feedback - Old Barrack Road corridor, Burkitt Road corridor, Peterhouse Crescent improvements, and 20 mph limits on roads across the town.

A report summarising the outcomes for the phase can be found on the [SCC website](#). Phase 2 was consulted on between last November to last January and focused on Quay Street, Market Hill, and the Thoroughfare.

A report summarising the outcomes for this phase has also been published on [the SCC website](#).

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### Window now open to apply for primary and secondary school places

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The deadline for applications to secure a place at a secondary school is Friday 31 October 2025 and for primary school places, including infant and junior schools, the deadline is Thursday 15 January 2026.

All applications received by the relevant closing date are processed at the same time using the schools' oversubscription criteria to prioritise applications when necessary. Late applications are processed after all of those received on time.

Last year, Suffolk County Council received over 14,700 on time applications for pupils wishing to start at a primary or infant school, or to transfer to a junior school, or into Year 7 at a secondary school from September 2025.

94% of applicants received offers for their first preference school and 98.4% of applicants received an offer for one of their top three preferred schools.

**Councillor Andrew Reid, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Education and SEND said:**

"Parents and carers need to carefully consider which schools to apply for on behalf of their child. They need to make sure they complete and submit their application by the closing date to give them the best chance of getting a place at one of their preferred schools. We recommend that parents and carers apply for more than one school, and they can list up to three schools on their application."

"I would strongly advise that parents and carers think about how their child will travel to school before they apply for a school place. It is important that parents and carers check which is their child's nearest suitable school on our Nearest School Checker because this might not be their catchment area school. This can be found at <http://nearestschool.suffolk.gov.uk/>."

Further information on SCC's School Travel Policy can be found at [www.suffolkonboard.com/schooltravel](http://www.suffolkonboard.com/schooltravel).

Parents and carers should apply online at [www.suffolk.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/admissions) as they will receive confirmation that their application has been received. If for any reason they are unable to apply online they should apply on a paper application (CAF1). Suffolk County Council is unable to acknowledge receipt of paper applications and therefore suggest that proof of posting is obtained.

If families are planning to move house or think their circumstances may change before next September, it is still important to make an application on time using the current address. It is recommended to apply for schools based on the current address in case the proposed move falls through. Advice and guidance about this process is available at [www.suffolk.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/admissions).

Families who apply online will be able to log on to the Online Service on National Offer Day, which is Monday 2 March 2026 for secondary school places and Thursday 16 April 2026 for primary school places, to see their offer of a school place, and they will receive an email to confirm this offer on the same day. Offer letters will be sent by second class post to applicants who made a paper application.

Information to help parents and carers make their application is available at [www.suffolk.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/admissions).

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## Second year of £500,000 Culture Project Fund launched

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Suffolk County Council is pleased to announce the second year of its £500,000 Culture Project Fund. This initiative is aimed at strengthening and supporting local arts and museum projects in our local communities across the county.

This fund's goal is to improve the cultural landscape in Suffolk, benefiting communities through diverse and impactful initiatives that align with the council's key priorities: health and wellbeing, economic development, environmental protection, and value for money.

The fund offers three tiers of grants:

**Small grants** up to £1,500

**Medium grants** up to £10,000

**Large grants** up to £20,000

This inclusive approach ensures that both grassroots ventures and larger, more established organisations have equal opportunities to access funding. Eligible applicants include Arts

and Museum organisations which operate as skilled freelancers, registered charities, community interest companies, non-profits, and social enterprises based in Suffolk.

The fund supports both capital and revenue projects, with a maximum of £10,000 available for capital expenditure.

"The second year of the Culture Project Fund marks a significant investment in the future of Suffolk's cultural sector and underlines our commitment to investment in Arts and Museums. By supporting projects that focus on our key priorities, we aim to create happier, healthier, and more united communities.

"This fund is about more than just arts and culture, it's about building resilience, fostering inclusion, and boosting the wellbeing of our residents. We're excited to see the positive impact these projects will have on our county."

The culture project fund will support projects that have been designed to reach, engage and inspire people and communities to take part in and enjoy arts and museums. The fund is particularly to support projects that reach some of our most vulnerable people and communities with an application process that is streamlined and accessible. This includes activities designed for those on low incomes, isolated individuals, and marginalised groups, the fund aims to support projects that enhance both mental and physical health, creating resilience and improving overall wellbeing through inclusive and accessible activities. Furthermore, the fund aims to strengthen Suffolk's economy by supporting projects that enhance skills development, promote social enterprises, and attract visitors. By focusing on these areas, the Council seeks to foster a thriving cultural sector that contributes to the county's growth.

For information on what was funded in 2025/26 see [Culture project fund - Suffolk County Council](#)

**Key Dates:**

Fund opens for applications: 15 September 2025

Medium and Large grant applications deadline: 28 November 2025

Medium and Large grants awarded by: End February 2026

Small grant presentations: Announced end of March 2026

Suffolk County Council encourages all eligible organisations to apply. For more information or to apply, please visit [www.suffolk.gov.uk/cultureprojectfund](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/cultureprojectfund) or contact the Arts & Museum Team at PH&C Culture Project Fund [cultureprojectfund@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:cultureprojectfund@suffolk.gov.uk)

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## One Suffolk proposal approved ahead of government submission

The One Suffolk proposal for a single unitary authority was approved by Suffolk County Council this afternoon (Tuesday 16 September).

One Suffolk proposes scrapping Suffolk's current six councils and replacing them with a single new council that is smarter, simpler and better - delivering both local and county-wide services.

This comes in response to the government's drive for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) across the country.

Cabinet members voted in favour of the proposal, which paves the way for the final business case to be submitted to government by 26 September 2025. The proposal was also considered by all county councillors.

**Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's cabinet member for devolution, local government reform and NSIPs, said:**

"Today marks another essential milestone in the process of Local Government Reorganisation in Suffolk, and this welcome decision means we can progress with formal submission of our business case.

"LGR provides a unique opportunity for Suffolk to revamp local government for the first time in over 50 years through the implementation of a new, more streamlined, authority. One Suffolk will provide a smarter, simpler and better option for residents and is the only financially resilient model, ensuring that savings are reinvested into local services.

"The One Suffolk model will save £39.4 million each year, while the proposal for three councils will cost significantly more than the current model - £13.1 million a year to be exact. These are essential funds that should be reinvested into services, making improvements that will directly impact communities in Suffolk.

"We also know how important it is that residents see the benefit from day one, which is why we strongly support the idea of harmonising council tax to the lowest level possible – meaning all residents will see either a reduction, or freeze, in their bill."

In his speech at the full council meeting, **Suffolk County Council Leader Matthew Hicks** said:

"This proposal has been built in partnership – it's been built with residents, councillors, business leaders, voluntary organisations, and community groups coming together. This has been a collaboration that has allowed us to explore in depth the issues that really matter to our residents. From local identity and historic heritage to the everyday challenges that people face.

"What we are proposing is not just change to a structure – it's a bold step forward that's stronger, more efficient, and more united for Suffolk. This is about creating a council that truly reflects the needs of the people it serves. One Suffolk listens, One Suffolk leads, and One Suffolk will deliver."

The One Suffolk business case demonstrates that a single unitary for Suffolk will save £78.2 million after the first five years, while three councils would cost an additional £145.3 million

more than the current two-tier system. Furthermore, after the first five years, one council would save £39.4 million a year, while three would cost £13.1 million more than the current model.

The foundations of this business case are built on rigorous financial analysis of Suffolk-based data conducted by global advisory firm Grant Thornton, rather than generic national modelling.

Among the many benefits in the One Suffolk business case is the proposal for a new deal for market towns, including Ipswich. This would be backed by a £40m capital investment fund, and a review of car parking charges and markets conducted in consultation with traders, businesses and representative bodies.

One Suffolk also proposes harmonising council tax to the lowest level across Suffolk. Based on current levels this would result in Band D properties seeing a reduction of £245 in Ipswich, £17 in East Suffolk, £29 in West Suffolk, £19 in Babergh and a freeze in Mid Suffolk. This is one of two business cases from Suffolk's councils outlining their proposed plans for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in the county. The alternative proposal from the districts and borough councils, to split Suffolk into three arbitrary council areas, could put key services such as social care at serious risk. It would also cost millions to set up.

Following today's approval, the One Suffolk proposal will be submitted to government for consideration. Government will then decide upon which proposal or proposals to take forward to a public consultation, ahead of a formal decision on how to proceed with LGR expected in Spring 2026.

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### Secrets of 1,500-year-old Suffolk cemetery revealed for the first time

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The large cemetery, where cremation was the sole rite, is the first of its kind discovered in Suffolk and one of only a handful found in the country.

Analysing human and animal bones from the site for the first time, the book reveals that the Anglo-Saxons buried there had been cremated fully clothed on a pyre.

The book also reveals details of many personal items discovered alongside some of the remains. These include glass beads, ivory bag rings, antler combs, gaming pieces, glass vessels, and metal objects such as pins, pendants, brooches and tweezers.

Although its full extent is not known, at least 1,500 individuals were likely to have been cremated and subsequently buried at the site. The cemetery is thought to have been used for generations by several small communities living along the River Lark and its tributaries, including people living at nearby West Stow.

The site was first excavated in 1947-49, and then again in 2015-16. The book explores the more recent excavations and re-examines the earlier excavation archive – giving new insights into the Anglo-Saxon cremation rite and the people buried at Lackford.

**Authors of the book are Sue Anderson, Faye Minter, Jude Plouviez, Ian Riddler and Nicola Trzaska-Nartowski. They said:**

“Reassessing all these items sheds new light on the fashions and grave goods in early Anglo-Saxon Suffolk, as well as the ceremonial activities involved.

“Burnt bones would have been carefully collected from the pyre site and placed in a pot. Sometimes food, such as pork, was burnt with them, and other animals such as horses were sacrificed whole on the pyre.

“The most recent excavations found the remains of 52 individuals, with men, women and children of all ages identified.”

“Suffolk has an amazing Anglo-Saxon past, and this latest book adds to our understanding of those people who made this county their home over 1,500 years ago.

“Thanks to the authors and Historic England, the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service has been able to produce an account of all the cremations found at Lackford to date and make them available for future research.”

The analysis and publication were supported and in part funded by Historic England.  
**Tony Calladine, East of England Regional Director, Historic England, said:**

“We’re delighted to have supported the post-excavation analysis and publication of this important publication, which gives a fascinating insight into the people buried and communities using the Lackford cremation cemetery.

“It has been so interesting to see new evidence examined alongside the older excavation archive which has led to a more comprehensive view of the pots and the finds and allowed comparison with other cemeteries, in particular Spong Hill in Norfolk.”

The most recent excavation archive will be held by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service and made available to future researchers. The earlier 1947-49 excavated archive is held by the Cambridge University Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology.

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### **Active Travel works to improve pedestrian safety by Ipswich Waterfront**

Works by Suffolk Highways to improve pedestrian safety near Ipswich Waterfront are set to begin.

The Active Travel scheme in Bridge Street and College Street will see pedestrian crossings giving access to the Waterfront relocated to make them more easily accessible.

As the gateway to The Waterfront, the works will act as a springboard for future wider public realm and development works at adjoining St Peter's Dock, allowing the space to be reimagined as part of wider development plans for the area.

The works are due to start on Monday September 22 and consist of:

- **Relocating the pedestrian crossing on College Street** so that it is in line with the footpath connecting St Peter's Street and Bridge Street
- **Relocating the pedestrian crossing on Bridge Street** so that it is in line with the entrance to St Peter's Dock
- **Permanently pedestrianising the temporarily blocked off section of road** which runs adjacent to the Bridge Street roundabout
- **Associated works**, including rerouting electrical services, carriageway resurfacing and reinstatement of road markings

They are scheduled to run until Friday November 28.

A range of traffic management methods will be in use at different times along College Street and Bridge Street during the works.

This includes lane closures during the day and full road closures at night.

**Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Ipswich and Operational Highways, said:** "The Waterfront is a hugely popular location in Ipswich and safe pedestrian access to it is paramount.

"With the existing crossings it has become apparent that they need to be re-aligned on the road to ensure people use them fully and aren't tempted to just cross the carriageway. "Inevitably these works may result in some disruption to motorists, for which we apologise in advance, but the end result will be a safer road environment for all."

Full road closures will take place on Tuesday September 30 and Wednesday October 1 between 7pm and 5am, Thursday November 20 between 7pm and 5am, and Wednesday November 26, between 7pm and 5am.

During these times, the road will be closed between:

- College Street: Full extent
- Key Street: From College Street to Slade Street
- Foundation Street: From Star Lane to College Street
- Foundry Lane: Full extent
- From Star Lane to Key Street

To allow residents access while the closure is in-place, there will be a suspension of the one-way system on College Street and Key Street, allowing road users to travel from both ends.

This will be controlled by operatives at each end of the closure, who will assist road users with access when required.

Full details of the works can be found on the [One.Network](#) website.

Active Travel England is responsible for raising standards of cycling and walking infrastructure and managing the national active travel budget, awarding funding for projects that improve both health and air quality.

In February it awarded Suffolk County Council a further £0.9 million from Round 5 of the Active Travel Fund, and £2.8 million from the Consolidated Active Travel Fund in its latest round of funding.

This is to be used on projects such as better footpaths and crossing points, maintaining and improving walking and cycling infrastructure, and traffic calming measures.

The county council is now considering suitable local schemes, which will be announced in the coming months.

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### Don't Go It Alone: Join Your Local Stop Smoking Group This Stoptober

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Feel Good Suffolk is running a series of local support groups to help people stop smoking with expert guidance and, most importantly, the encouragement of others on the same journey.

We all know quitting smoking is tough. But it doesn't have to be something you do on your own. Sharing the experience with others, talking honestly about the challenges, and celebrating milestones together can make all the difference.

Research shows that staying smoke-free for 28 days ensures you are up to five times more likely to quit for good. Stopping smoking means more energy, fresher skin, easier breathing – and more money in your pocket for the things you enjoy.

Each group, led by trained stop smoking advisors, runs for six weeks and offers:

- Free stop smoking products such as Nicotine Replacement Therapies and vapes.
- Practical tips and strategies to beat cravings
- Help with stress and coping mechanisms
- Advice on stop smoking products and treatments
- A supportive space to share experiences and keep each other motivated

On top of the group sessions, one-to-one support is also available for those who prefer a more personalised approach. Feel Good Suffolk is committed to helping everyone find a method that works for them, ensuring that quitting smoking is a positive and successful experience.

Stuart Keeble, Director of Public Health at Suffolk County Council, said:

*"Giving up smoking is one of the best things you can do for your health, but we know it's not easy. That's why we're encouraging everyone to take advantage of the Feel Good Suffolk off this Stoptober."*

*"By taking part in our local group sessions, you'll not only get professional advice but also the encouragement of a community who understands what you're going through. "Together we can make this Stoptober the start of something life changing."*

Lowestoft resident Victoria, has seen major improvements to her health since attending a Feel Good Suffolk stop smoking group. She said;

*"I so appreciate what Feel Good Suffolk have done in helping me to give up smoking. Joining the group meant I finally quit after 40 years!"*

*"Having a carbon monoxide reading taken each week is really helpful as you can actually see that you are improving your health. The advisors were just brilliant. They helped to find the best treatment and I could speak to them if I had any issues or needed help."*

Local groups will be available in various parts of Suffolk, providing people with convenient access to the help they need. Whether you've tried to quit before or are doing it for the first time, you don't have to do it alone. Feel Good Suffolk is here to support you every step of the way.

Each group session is free and will last for six weeks. Dates and venues are as follows:

- Ipswich, Gainsborough Library – starts Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> September, 2-3pm
- Ipswich County Library (Group 1) - Saturday mornings, starting 4<sup>th</sup> October, 10-11am
- Ipswich County Library (Group 2) – Saturday mornings, starting 15<sup>th</sup> November, 10-11am
- Felixstowe, The Grove Medical Centre – starts Monday 6<sup>th</sup> October, 5.30pm-6.30pm
- Lowestoft, Kirkley Centre – starts Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> October, Tuesday evenings 6.30pm-7.30pm
- Online sessions available Mondays 10-11am or Tuesdays 5.30-6.30pm

Booking is essential for all groups, and the information will be regularly updated on the Feel Good Suffolk website.

For more information and to sign up for a group stop smoking programme, visit [www.feelgoodsuffolk.co.uk/Stoptober](http://www.feelgoodsuffolk.co.uk/Stoptober)

For more information, visit [www.feelgoodsuffolk.co.uk](http://www.feelgoodsuffolk.co.uk), email us at [feelgoodsuffolk@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:feelgoodsuffolk@suffolk.gov.uk) or call 0345 603 4060.

## Suffolk firefighters stretch their limits and overcome obstacles for charity

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On Sunday 21st September, a team of firefighters from Princes Street, Ipswich East and Stowmarket successfully tackled the Larking Gowen Ipswich Half Marathon, carrying a 14 kg operational stretcher loaded with a 30 kg dummy around the entire 21 km course. They crossed the finish line in 2 hrs 53 minutes.

The challenge, which demanded stamina, strength and teamwork, was completed in aid of the Fire Fighters Charity, which provides practical, psychological and physical support to firefighters and their families, and the Stowmarket Saturday ASD Club, which offers vital support to young people with Autism and those who care for them.

The team set a target to raise £1,000 for each charity.

Those who took part included George Trott, Grant Whitehead, Ash Buxton, Genna Bird, Laura Grinsted, Jaime Cryer, Niamh Searle, Matt Shepherd, Jimmy Ho, former firefighter Tony Williams, and Jack Griffin from FlamePro, which supplies innovative firefighting training equipment and safety solutions.

Chief Fire Officer, Jon Lacey and Area Manager, Per Middleton also took on the challenge to show their support.

### **Commenting after the race, George Trott said:**

“Carrying the stretcher for 21 km was a real test of endurance, but we worked as a team and kept each other going. The encouragement from the crowds and the support we’ve had in donations made a huge difference – knowing we were raising money for two causes that help so many people kept us moving to the finish line.”

Just a week earlier, on Saturday 13th September, Station Manager and Equipment Manager Alex Smith took on the gruelling Autumn Wolf Run in Leamington Spa – a 10k obstacle course featuring 30 muddy and demanding challenges, from climbing and crawling to wading through icy water.

Alex’s motivation came from his personal journey with the Fire Fighters Charity. After facing challenges in his family life and mental health, the charity was there for him when he needed support. These programmes gave him the tools to regain resilience, balance his wellbeing, and support his family.

“The Fire Fighters Charity was there for me when I needed support,” said Alex. “Taking part in the Wolf Run was my way of giving something back, while also showing colleagues that it’s okay to ask for help. The encouragement I’ve received from my family, colleagues, and those who donated has been incredible.”

Alex completed the course with colleagues from other fire and rescue services – Sam from North Wales, Neil from the West Midlands and Sasha from Essex.

**Commenting on the fundraising activities undertaken, Chief Fire Officer Jon Lacey said:**

“These challenges show the dedication and determination of our people – not only in their work protecting our communities, but also in going above and beyond to raise money for causes that support our fire family and local residents. I’m extremely proud of everyone who took part.”

**Steve Wiles, Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Safety, added:**

“It’s inspiring to see firefighters pushing themselves in these physically demanding challenges while raising vital funds for charities that make a real difference to people across our communities. Their commitment and teamwork highlight the positive impact they have beyond their day-to-day duties.”

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### **Ipswich council’s selfish attitude means Suffolk communities will suffer**

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Ipswich Borough Council’s selfish attitude means communities across Suffolk are going to be left at the mercy of energy and water project developers, Suffolk County Council has said. On Friday 19 September, Suffolk’s six council leaders met with the police and crime commissioner (PCC) to consider a proposal to collectively invest public money in a project to help parish councils across Suffolk respond to and deal with multiple and uncoordinated nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIPs) – like Sizewell C in the east, Sunnica solar farm in the west and the Norwich to Tilbury pylons that cut through Suffolk from north to south.

NSIPs are detailed and complex, meaning it’s often difficult for communities to engage with proposals and ensure local concerns are addressed through decision-making processes. This often requires access to technical expertise beyond the capability and capacity of residents and parish councils. Across Suffolk, there are around 20 NSIPs either proposed, submitted or approved.

The proposal put before leaders was to invest £80,000 in a programme to provide dedicated support to parish councils – which would boost the £30,000 already committed by the Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC). The support would include help to understand the process, deadlines and opportunities for dialogue with developers – as well as connect those communities with experts willing to do pro bono work in this area.

At the meeting, the leader of Ipswich Borough Council, Councillor Neil MacDonald, said he could not support the proposal because the county town does not have any parish councils and questioned whether SALC was the right organisation to host the additional resource. This is despite his council supporting a proposal to subsume 66 parishes into the new Greater Ipswich Council.

Investment decisions require unanimous support – so although all the other councils and the PCC supported it, the proposal was rejected.

**Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council’s cabinet member for devolution, local government reform and NSIPs, said:**

“If this isn’t a perfect demonstration of the need to scrap all of Suffolk’s councils and have one organisation that supports the whole of the county, I don’t know what is.

“This is exactly the kind of narrow-minded selfish approach that will hold Suffolk back if we end up with three councils not doing what is right for our county. If Ipswich Borough Council leaders seriously want to subsume 66 parishes into their expanded council border then they should try to understand organisations like SALC, and parish councils, that do vital work for residents.

“The Suffolk Public Sector Leaders Group has previously invested in both county-wide and local projects – including some that have benefited Ipswich specifically. Yet faced with the opportunity to act in the clear interests of the county, our borough council has turned its back.

“Ipswich’s MP recently signed a deal with Sizewell C to create 500 jobs for people in the town. Now when it comes to supporting the areas affected by this and other projects, political goodwill seems to have evaporated.

“Frankly this is an embarrassing and shortsighted position to take and I expect our colleagues in the district councils will be angry about the borough’s approach. This is exactly the kind of thing that will happen under a three-council model.”

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### Safeguarding Suffolk’s treasured natural and historic sites

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Representatives from the National Trust, Europe’s largest conservation charity, Matt Wilson, Countryside Manager, and Sam Cooper, Area Ranger for Dunwich Heath, met with SFRS Equipment Officer and tactical wildfire advisor, Alex Smith, at the Dunwich Heath site to discuss joint strategies for safeguarding the area throughout the year.

Discussions included practical considerations such as fire routes, access points, onsite equipment, and water supply, alongside strategies for educating visitors about fire risks. The organisations also explored sharing knowledge, closer working arrangements, and plans for a future joint exercise.

**Chief Fire Officer, Jon Lacey said:**

"Working with the National Trust allows us to take a proactive approach to protecting Suffolk’s communities and treasured sites. By combining resources, expertise, and local

knowledge, we can respond effectively and ensure our crews are prepared for the unique challenges these landscapes present — all year round."

**Councillor Steve Wiles, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection, added:**

"This meeting demonstrates the value of a shared approach. By working together, SFRS and the National Trust are safeguarding our environment, heritage, and communities. It's a model of proactive protection that benefits everyone in Suffolk."

**Reflecting on the visit, Sam Cooper, said:**

"It was great to welcome Alex to Dunwich Heath and discuss the many ways we can work together to share knowledge. Planning and preparation remain crucial for protecting this special heathland habitat throughout the year."

The National Trust's conservation portfolio in Suffolk is extensive, encompassing historic houses, gardens, coastlines, and countryside, including Orford Ness, Ickworth Estate, Lavenham Guildhall, and Sutton Hoo's Anglo-Saxon burial grounds.

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### Ambitious new plan to Get Suffolk Working

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At the heart of the draft Get Suffolk Working strategy is the launch of Connect to Work, a major new programme designed to support people with health conditions, disabilities and complex barriers into sustainable and meaningful employment.

Backed by up to £9.5 million in funding from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Connect to Work aims to support more than 2,700 Suffolk residents over the next five years. The programme will offer tailored training, personalised support and job placements, helping people find meaningful work that aligns with their strengths, aspirations and work experience.

Connect to Work forms a key part of the wider Get Suffolk Working strategy – Suffolk's local response to the government's national Get Britain Working initiative, which seeks to reduce economic inactivity and help people find good work.

**Cllr Richard Smith MVO, deputy leader of the council and cabinet member for finance, economic development and skills, said:**

"There is strong evidence that being in work improves health and wellbeing and helps prevent social exclusion. Our economy also depends on a strong, skilled workforce for it to grow and thrive.

“Get Suffolk Working brings those priorities together with a practical, inclusive plan that helps people overcome barriers to employment. Everyone deserves the chance for a meaningful, secure and fairly paid job. This plan will help to make that possible.”

The plan has been developed in partnership with the DWP, the Suffolk and North-East Essex Integrated Care Board, and the Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board, with Suffolk County Council acting as the accountable body.

The plan focuses on stronger collaboration between health, skills, and employment services to build a more joined-up and inclusive system that works for all residents.

The cabinet will be asked to approve the draft plan and delegate authority to the Get Suffolk Working Partnership Board to finalise and oversee its delivery. The final plan is expected to be published by the end of October 2025.

Get Suffolk Working will complement and enhance existing local strategies – including the Suffolk Economic Strategy, the Local Skills Improvement Plan, and integrated care and health strategies – ensuring public investment delivers the maximum impact for residents and employers across Suffolk.

## Inspiring Stories and Local Heroes Honoured at Suffolk Community Awards 2025

Individuals, teams, groups, charities and communities were honoured and applauded, in an occasion jointly staged by Community Action Suffolk (CAS), Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC).

A total of 17 awards were presented on the night, following a summer of judging which saw a record breaking 255 nominations painstakingly assessed by representatives from the trio of organising bodies.

The venue was packed out with award sponsors, local councillors, and of course the winners and representatives from the awarded organisations and charities who were acknowledged for their hard work and success over the past year. Guests were welcomed with refreshments to the sound of a local quartet who were set up in the picturesque grounds at the Food Museum and the Awards were presented by well-known Suffolk broadcaster Mark Murphy MBE.

The accolades were collated into three main categories on the night: Community Awards, Young People Awards and Volunteering Awards.

The awards highlighted the breadth of community action in Suffolk from individual volunteers, young people, councils, faith groups and more, plus a new award which celebrated one community's climate response of the year.

Holbrook Parish Council were the worthy winners of the new climate response of the year in recognition of their efforts to establish the Greener Holbrook Greener World group in 2023, which has worked to encourage local climate action and awareness. Working alongside the council, the group has helped embed sustainability into decision-making, from considering biodiversity in planning to initiatives such as tree planting, hedgehog highways, LED street lighting, and community events. Their Climate Action Plan continues to evolve and is reviewed annually.

Also awarded on the night was Lesley Hill, who took the title of Councillor of the Year, she said:

"To receive the news that I had been nominated and selected as the winner for Councillor of the Year came as a complete surprise.

I am delighted and honoured to receive this award as a member of Leiston-cum-Sizewell Town Council. I take the role of Councillor and Mayor very seriously as a representative of our community.

I also accept this award on behalf of my fellow councillors who contribute to the work in the community."

This year's Andrew Towers Award was proudly presented to Harli Dixon, whose inspiring story deeply touched the audience. Presented by Norman and Glenys Towers, the award recognised Harli's remarkable dedication in raising £24,000 for St Elizabeth Hospice over the past three years, in memory of her late mother.

Mark O'Reilly from Newmarket received the Outstanding Contribution to Volunteering Award for 25 years of dedicated service with the New Astley Amateur Boxing Club, while an additional award was also presented this year to a rather special recipient – Robbie the horse. Accepting the Exceptional Community Volunteering Award on his behalf was his owner, Sarah Hill. Robbie has been recognised for a decade of dedicated service with the Suffolk constabulary, promoting positive community engagement, and playing a valuable role in rural crime prevention.

Only its third year as an award category, the Faith Award received a record number of nominations, with the honour on the night going to Ipswich-based charity Tools with a Mission. Celebrated for their outstanding work, the charity collects and refurbishes unwanted tools, preventing nearly 400 tonnes of waste from entering landfill each year. Their efforts provide valuable volunteering opportunities in Suffolk while supporting over 600 organisations worldwide, equipping people with the tools to transform their lives and communities.

Meanwhile, Lee Maddox of Bardwell Village in West Suffolk, received the Suffolk Good Neighbour Award in recognition of his commitment and passion in organising a tractor run fundraiser. His efforts raised £15,000, providing vital support to five local families who had lost their homes in a recent fire.

The full list of winners are as follows:

**Most Active Village**

Winner: Great Barton

Highly Commendation: Crowfield

**Most Active Town**

Winner: Framlingham

**Village Hall & Community Building Award**

Winner: Gosbeck Village Hall

**The Faith Award**

Winner: Tools with a Mission

**Ian Campbell MBE Award**

Winner: Greg Deeks

**Colonel Probert Award**

Winner: Suffolk Sound Radio

**Councillor of the Year**

Winner: Lesley Hill

Highly commended: Peter Fisk

**Clerk of the Year**

Winner: Colin Poole

Highly commended: Joanna Abbott

**Council of the Year**

Joint Winners: Haverhill Town Council and Saxmundham Town Council

**Climate Response of the Year**

Winner: Holbrook Parish Council

**Andrew Towers Award Winner**

Harli Dixon

**Roddy Macleod Award**

Winner: Level Two Youth Project

**Anne Dunford OBE Award**

Winner: Newmarket Detachment Army Cadet Force

**Suffolk Good Neighbour Award**

Winner: Lee Maddox

**Event Organiser of the Year**

Winner: The Rotary Club of Bury St Edmunds

**Special Award for Exceptional Community Volunteering**

Winner: Robbie & Sarah Hills

**Outstanding Contribution to Volunteering Award**

Winner: Mark O'Reilly

Hannah Reid, Chief Executive of Community Action Suffolk, said:

"The awards are the big occasion for acknowledging our unsung volunteer heroes, and the organisations that selflessly do so much more to improve the lives of others. They more than deserve the accolade. In the backdrop to this, it's important to remember that across Suffolk there are many more volunteers that are constantly active in our communities. Week in week out, they go about helping where it's needed.

They are all winners and deserve thanks. In today's climate, we need more of them." Councillor Richard Smith MVO, Cabinet member for Finance, Economic Development and skills attended the event on behalf of Suffolk County Council. He said:

"It was a pleasure to attend the Suffolk Community Awards and hear the inspiring stories of people and groups making such a positive impact across the county.

"Congratulations to all the winners and nominees for their outstanding contributions Suffolk."

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### New Pippins footbridge in Gipping Valley opened

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A new footbridge in the Gipping Valley has been installed by Suffolk Highways.

Pippins footbridge is now open on the riverside path between Needham Market and Baylham.

Construction began in June 2025 and concluded in August, following a seven-week build programme managed in a challenging remote location.

It has now been formally opened by Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Operational Highways, and Councillor James Patchett of the River Gipping Trust.

The previous bridge was closed after being deemed unsafe due to abutment failure.

The new bridge now is 4ft (1.2 metres) wide – doubling the previous width - and features compact earth ramps with a gentle 1:12 gradient, eliminating the previous stepped access and making it fully wheelchair-friendly.

With new abutments constructed behind the damaged originals, the bridge is now significantly longer and designed to last more than 100 years.

The bridge was commissioned by Suffolk County Council's Rights of Way team and built by Parc Civils on behalf of M Group, which delivers highways services in Suffolk.

Extensive environmental surveys were undertaken prior to works, including monitoring for otter activity.

No evidence of a holt was found, allowing construction to proceed without ecological disruption.

**Councillor West** said: "I am delighted that Suffolk Highways has been able to work with the Gipping Valley Trust to install a new bridge.

"The Parc Civils team have done a fantastic job in building a bridge that will serve people enjoying walks along the Gipping for many years to come."

**Councillor Patchett** said: "The River Gipping Trust is delighted to have Pippins bridge reinstated after many years of closure.

"The bridge is now wider, with accessible earth ramps which open this beautiful stretch of the Gipping to even more people."

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### Lord Lieutenant cuts ribbon on new Haverhill relief road

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The new stretch of the A1307 has opened in Haverhill today following an official ribbon cutting ceremony.

Housebuilder Persimmon Homes celebrated the formal opening which marked the completion of the 1.2-mile relief road, to be known locally as Suffolk Regiment Way, in the north west of the town.

The Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk, Clare, Countess of Euston, cut the ribbon alongside West Suffolk MP Nick Timothy, Suffolk County Council vice chair Councillor David Roach, Councillor Jim Thorndyke, Cabinet member for planning for West Suffolk Council, and Haverhill mayor Councillor Quinn Cox.

Also in attendance were local councillors and members of B Company (Suffolk) 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Royal Anglian Regiment, the successors to the Suffolk Regiment following amalgamation.

Work started on the road in July 2022 and there was a clear vision – to create a route that would ease congestion, improve safety and support the growing community in Haverhill.

The route will now form part of the A1307, linking with the A143, while the existing A1307 will be downgraded to a C road, reflecting its new role in the local network.

Stacy Brett, Deputy Managing Director for Persimmon Homes Suffolk, said: "It is an honour to stand here today as we open this new road. This is a key piece of infrastructure that will benefit everyone who lives in, works in, or visits the town.

"The new Suffolk Regiment Way is a cornerstone of our flagship Boyton Place development, which is bringing more than 1,000 new homes to the town, as well as shopping facilities and a café space.

"We're proud to not only be bringing these new homes to the town but also to have delivered this significant highways upgrade which will serve Haverhill for generations to come."

Councillor David Roach, Vice Chair of Suffolk County Council and who represents Haverhill East & Kedington, said: "It is a pleasure to see the opening of this wonderful new road— just over a mile long, but with an impact that will be felt far beyond its length.

"I am particularly pleased that much thought has been given into how the road can help biodiversity, including a tunnel to support known badger routes, and ponds that will, over time, evolve into valuable habitats for wildlife.

"This road is a symbol of thoughtful planning, resilience, and a commitment to both progress and preservation, and will serve the community of Haverhill for generations to come."

Maj Paul Machnicki, Officer Commanding of B Company (Suffolk), 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment, said: "The regiment has an unbreakable bond with the county of Suffolk. "We are proud to be a part of the opening of Suffolk Regiment Way and are grateful to continue our strong association with the town and community of Haverhill.

"This follows on from the Battalion receiving Freedom of the Town of Haverhill in 2019."

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### One Suffolk plan submitted to government

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One Suffolk – the business case put forward by Suffolk County Council for a single unitary authority that is smarter, simpler and better – was issued to government today (Thursday 25 September).

One Suffolk proposes scrapping Suffolk's six councils, made up of the districts, borough and county council, and replacing them with a single new council that would deliver both local and county-wide services. This comes in response to the government's drive for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) across the country.

**Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's cabinet member for Devolution, Local Government Reform and NSIPs, said:**

"We are confident that One Suffolk will save Suffolk £39.4 million each year, enabling the new unitary authority to deliver bold new initiatives such as a £40 million new deal for market towns and Ipswich and a full review of car parking and markets.

"Meanwhile, the opposing plan for three unitaries would cost an eye-watering £145.3 million more than the current two-tier system, and their business case lacks robust, local evidence.

"Thank you to everyone who has engaged with and supported the One Suffolk plan. I'd urge you all to read out business case and let us know your thoughts – and of course to take part in the government-run consultation once it is live."

The foundations of the One Suffolk business case are built on rigorous financial analysis of Suffolk-based data conducted by global advisory firm Grant Thornton, rather than relying on generic national modelling.

Among the many benefits in the One Suffolk business case is the proposal for a new deal for market towns, including Ipswich. This would be backed by a £40m capital investment fund, alongside a review of car parking charges and markets conducted in consultation with traders, businesses and representative bodies.

The One Suffolk campaign engaged communities from across Suffolk, with 8,189 responses to our Residents' Survey. This made it the largest survey response rate for the county council in the past decade.

The next step in the process of local government reorganisation will be for government to consult on the preferred options for unitary authorities in Suffolk, before taking a decision on which proposal to take forward.

Read the business case:

- [One Suffolk Business Case](#)

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## **Suffolk County Council leader announces Cabinet changes**

The leader of Suffolk County Council has made changes to the authority's Cabinet. Councillor Matthew Hicks has appointed Councillor Nadia Cenci as Cabinet Member for Communities.

Her broad policy portfolio includes arts and heritage, Citizens' Advice, community safety (including domestic abuse), coroner services, customer services and complaints, equality, Gypsy and traveller services, human resources, libraries, PREVENT and violence against women and girls, registrars, safer and stronger communities, and the voluntary sector.

Additionally, Councillor Richard Rout, Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reform and NSIPs, will take on additional responsibilities for environment.

Councillor Debbie Richards and Councillor Joe Mason also have new roles as Deputy Cabinet Members, for archaeology and landscape partnerships, and property and county farms, respectively.

Councillor Hicks said: “I am delighted to make these appointments and have every confidence that our cabinet will continue to prioritise the needs of Suffolk residents whilst making the big decisions that come with these roles.

“By refreshing and revising the ways in which we work, we can continue to challenge ourselves and council officers to improve what we do for the benefit of Suffolk.”

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### Suffolk Business Board backs devolution as catalyst for growth

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The letter outlines the Board’s strong belief that devolution will empower local leadership, attract significant investment and drive economic growth across the region.

Suffolk’s £21 billion economy is among the best-connected in the UK, home to globally recognised businesses and thousands of ambitious enterprises. The Suffolk Business Board, comprising leaders from key sectors across the region, is spearheading a new economic strategy aimed at accelerating inward investment, job creation and skills development. The letter states:

“The ambitions and opportunities business can deliver needs the active support of a streamlined governance structure that can help create the conditions for growth. Which is why, as local business leaders, we endorse the proposal to create a Mayoral Combined County Authority across Norfolk and Suffolk – a transformative opportunity to unlock growth, give more power and decision-making authority to local people and shape a more prosperous future for our region.”

The letter highlights the benefits of devolution, including local decision-making, guaranteed long-term funding and greater influence at the national level.

“Devolution means decisions made closer to home, by people who understand our local strengths, challenges and ambitions and want to help make things happen. It offers the opportunity to create high-quality jobs, attract long-term investment – including for vital improvements to infrastructure – and transform the delivery of public services in a way that reflects Suffolk’s unique character and needs.”

The Suffolk Business Board stresses that a directly elected mayor would provide strategic leadership and accountability to deliver on key priorities such as regenerating Ipswich, expanding clean energy innovation in East Suffolk, and growing the region’s digital and technology sectors.

The letter also underscores the successful track record of collaboration between Suffolk and Norfolk, which has already attracted over £1.3 billion in investment and created and safeguarded more than 15,300 new jobs in recent years.

**Read the full letter:**

- [Open letter from the Suffolk Business Board](#)

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## OPINION: Our plan to get Suffolk working

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Work, health and community are deeply connected. In Suffolk, we want everyone to have the chance to thrive in all three.

Overall, our employment and economic activity rates suggest we are already performing well compared to some other areas of the country. Yet for many people, there remain real barriers to finding and keeping a good job.

That's why, as the cabinet member responsible for economic development and skills at Suffolk County Council, I'm pleased to be bringing a new plan to Get Suffolk Working to our cabinet meeting this week. The plan's aim is to reduce economic inactivity and help more people into sustainable, meaningful and rewarding employment.

This is Suffolk's response to the government's Get Britain Working white paper, which aims to raise the national employment rate to 80%. Our approach brings together health, skills and employment services, because we know people's lives don't fit neatly into one box. We want support to be joined up and shaped around what really matters to people.

Economic inactivity is a complex challenge. In Suffolk, long-term health conditions are now the most common reason people are out of work – a trend that's grown in recent years. Other barriers include low qualifications, caring responsibilities and limited access to transport or digital services.

These challenges are not new, but they are pressing, and they require a new kind of response – one that is collaborative, compassionate and focused on real circumstances. It complements existing strategies – like the Suffolk Economic Strategy, the Local Skills Improvement Plan and health and care strategies – and focuses on making better use of the resources we already have.

A key part of the plan is the launch of Connect to Work, a new programme backed by up to £9.5 million in funding from the DWP. It will help more than 2,700 Suffolk residents over the next five years – particularly those with health conditions, disabilities and other complex challenges. The programme will offer tailored training, personalised support and job placements, helping people find work that matches their strengths and experience.

That's what Get Suffolk Working is all about: making sure support reaches the people who need it most, in ways that work for them. Whether someone has been out of work for months or years, we want to meet them where they are and help them take the next step. This is a plan is for those with a disability who want to work for an employer that will enable them to fulfil their aspirations. It's for the young person with anxiety who needs support to build confidence. It's for the carer who's ready to re-enter the workforce but needs flexible opportunities.

We've also looked at how services can work better together. For example, someone receiving mental health support should be able to get advice about employment. A young person leaving school should be able to find a clear route into training and work. And businesses struggling to recruit should be able to connect with local talent that's too often overlooked.

To keep things on track, a new *Get Suffolk Working Partnership Board* will oversee the strategy, supported by a dedicated delivery group. Collaboration has been central to developing this plan, and it will be key to delivering it.

The benefits are clear. Being in work can improve health and wellbeing, reduce social isolation, and build confidence and independence. For our economy, it means a stronger, more resilient workforce that can support growth and innovation.

As cabinet prepares to review the strategy, I encourage anyone interested in employment, health or community wellbeing to visit [www.suffolk.gov.uk](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk) and read the draft Get Suffolk Working report. It sets out where we are, what we've learned and how we plan to help more people succeed in Suffolk.